University of Arizona
School of Geography and Development

Master’s in Development Practice Student Handbook

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This Handbook serves as a policy reference guide for students, faculty and administrators affiliated with the Master’s in Development Practice (MDP) program at the University of Arizona, School of Geography and Development (SGD). It covers topics such as curriculum and degree requirements, standards of academic performance and conduct, registration, guidelines for graduation, tuition and fees, funding and financial aid, grievance procedures, professional development resource, and various related University of Arizona policies and regulations. In addition to the policies outlined in the MDP Student Handbook, students, faculty and administrators are subject to all applicable university-wide policies. Please consult these three essential UA Graduate College websites for the most current policy information: 1) Graduate College, http://grad.arizona.edu; 2) Policies and Procedures, http://grad.arizona.edu/dgreecert; and 3) New and Current Students, http://grad.arizona.edu/current-students.
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I. Academic Affairs

MDP Degree Requirements & Curriculum
MDP students are required to complete **47 credits** in order to graduate, including 28 credits in the required core curriculum areas, 12 credits of Integrative Coursework, and 9 credits of electives.

Required Core Courses
As part of the MDP core curriculum, students are required to take courses in the following four areas of study:

- **Social Sciences** (10 credits), e.g. Principles of Social Science for Development; The Role of Culture in Sustainable Development; Macro and Micro-economic Tools for Development Practice, plus a 1 credit Development Boot Camp.

- **Natural Sciences** (6 credits), e.g. Introduction to Natural Systems; Natural Resources Management.

- **Health Sciences** (6 credits), e.g. Introduction to Global Health and Development; Global Health and Nutrition: Case Studies and Community Responses.

- **Development Management** (6 credits), e.g. Essential Management Principles for Development; Analytical Methods for Managing Sustainable Development Practice.

In addition, students must complete **12 credits of Integrative Coursework**, which includes:

- Methods in Development Practice (3 Credits)
- Global Classroom: Integrated Approaches to Sustainable Development Practice (1 Credit)
- Cross-Cohort Thesis Workshop (6 Credits)
- Summer Field Practicum (2 Credits)

Electives
Along with integrative coursework and courses in the core curriculum areas, students may take 3 elective courses (9 credits) in the student’s chosen area of specialization. Students should consult with their advisor when choosing from a list of approved electives, and be prepared to justify a course outside of that approved list.

Specialization
The elective coursework, in combination with the core curriculum and summer practicum experience, allows students to develop a specialization within the field of development. In consultation with their advisors, students may either develop their own areas of specialization or follow one of three pre-existing tracks. These include:
**Global Health and Development**: Offered through the Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health, students undertake coursework from the Global Health Certificate curriculum, including nutrition, project design and implementation, infectious disease, and the interplay between poverty and health.

**Collaborative Governance**: Offered through the School of Government & Public Policy, students undertake coursework focusing on competencies that enable students to manage collaboration across institutional and sectoral boundaries. The concentration is designed for students who intend to work in government, non-profit organizations or the corporate sector where cooperation with other institutions, stakeholders and the public at large is important.

**Natural Resource Management**: Specifically development for the MDP program in partnership with the School of Natural Resources and the Environment, this track allows MDP students to undertake coursework within several areas of interest related to natural resources.

In addition to the above specializations, the MDP program is also exploring optional concentrations in Water Policy and Human Rights. More details will become available as this option develops. Please inquire if interested.

**Advising & Mentoring**
Success in the MDP program relies on effective relationships between the student and their advisors. Upon arrival in the program, new students meet with the MDP Director to discuss their goals and interests. The Director and Assistant Director will be the student’s primary contact throughout their time in the MDP program and are available to advise students on course selection, practicum planning, professional development, the final report, and other matters. However, students are also highly encouraged to seek out, develop, and maintain informal mentoring relationship with different faculty members and practitioners affiliated with the MDP program. The Director and Assistant Director will guide students toward potential mentors who have professional experience related to the student’s field of interest. Students should also seek out advice from faculty whose courses they take as well as with professional practitioners or alumni who are occasionally invited to MDP events such as brown-bag lunches.

**Plan of Study**
In consultation with and approval from the MDP, each student is required to develop a Plan of Study outlining a list of proposed courses the student intends to take and when.

The Plan of Study should be completed as early as possible during the first few months of the program and must be submitted to the Graduate College no later than the second semester. The plan can be amended later if need be. The form can be submitted through GradPath on UAccess. There is a one-time submission fee of $35 associated with this form.

On GradPath, students may be prompted to submit names for their committee. As the MDP program does not require a Master’s thesis, students do not need to form an advisory committee and may write in the MDP Director’s name as their advisor.
Registration
Students can use UAccess to register for all regular graduate courses. Students must first get approval from the MDP Director before registering for Independent Study or Thesis credits. Following approval, students should contact the Program Coordinator (Liz Cordova) who can manually register them.

Students will receive an e-mail alert from the Graduate College notifying them about their registration window. Students can also register for classes during open enrollment following the priority registration period. International students cannot register for classes until after they have attended the University of Arizona orientation for international students. In order to avoid late fees or other inconveniences, students should consult these dates and deadlines outlined by the Office of the Registrar, and these from the Bursar’s Office.

Course Load
Students typically enroll in 9-12 credits each semester depending on their plan of study. Students can take a maximum of 16 credits each semester. More can be taken with approval from the Director, but this is not advised. International Students must be enrolled in a minimum of 6 credits to maintain their student visa status. Likewise, students receiving a Graduate Assistantship (TA or RA position) must be enrolled in a minimum of 6 credits.

Course Waivers and Substitutions
Requests for a course waiver or substitutions for required courses may be approved at the discretion of the MDP Director. If a student wishes to waive or substitute 2 or more courses, this requires approval from the Graduate College.

Desk space, Computing, and Printing
MDP Students requiring office space in SGD may request a desk from Amanda Percy, the Administration Manager. Desk space for MDP students is located in the graduate student pod areas on the 4th and 5th floors of ENR2.

Students who only require occasional access to a computer rather than permanent desk space can use the computers located in the Majors Lab on the 5th floor of ENR2. Students with laptops can also work in the Research Room on the 4th floor. All students can obtain permission to print on the 5th floor printers by submitting a service request via SBS Ticket Dog.

Academic Standards and Satisfactory Progress
At the start of every Spring semester, each MDP student is required to meet with the MDP Director and/or Assistant Director to discuss their progress toward completion of the MDP degree. Students will have the opportunity to discuss the courses they have completed and their plans for future coursework, the field practicum, the final report, and graduation. If a student is failing to make satisfactory progress, the Director will recommend a corrective course of action.

Leaves of Absence
Students may request a leave of absence for one semester or one year to be approved by the MDP Director. Leaves of absence are approved on a case-by-case basis depending on the situation. If a
student requires additional leave after completion of the initial leave of absence, another one semester or one year period of leave may be requested. Students who do not return at the end of the approved leave or who do not enroll for a semester without being granted official leave of absence will be considered to be making unsatisfactory academic progress.

**Time Limits**
Although it is not expected that students would need this much time, there is a seven year limit on all graduate coursework at the University of Arizona (excluding leaves of absence.)

**Grievance Procedure**
The MDP Program at Arizona prides itself on fostering a community of practice between and among students, faculty, staff and partners. As such, we encourage frequent and open communication between students and their professors or other advisers. We feel this kind of honest and ongoing communication is the best way to maintain good working relations and to find mutually satisfactory resolutions to conflicts before they start. Should a problem arise, it is important that students first try to seek resolution directly with the party involved. This can be done in writing or in person. The student may also seek the guidance or assistance of the MDP Director or the SGD Director in resolving the problem. If informal attempts at conflict resolution are unsuccessful, the student may file a formal grievance following Graduate College guidelines. The decision to file a formal grievance will not subject the student or any other party involved to reprisal by the MDP program, faculty advisors, SGD or the University. Nor will a student’s grades, evaluations, recommendations or other performance measure be affected by this procedure.

**II. Practicum**
The MDP program includes a summer practicum that creates a structured opportunity for field-based learning within an existing development project or program. Students can undertake this field practicum with international partners abroad; at the headquarters of national or international organizations and agencies located in Washington, D.C. or elsewhere; or with local projects situated in the Southwest/borderlands region. Although students may choose the site and type of organization based on their interests, the partner organization and the nature of the work must be related to the practice of sustainable development and related issues (including global public health, natural resource management, gender empowerment, education, youth development, livelihoods, agricultural and rural development, etc.) Although the position may involve some administrative tasks, the summer field practicum or internship should primarily be substantive and professional in nature. Finally, although students may work with smaller, grass-roots community organizations, such organizations must be registered with the proper local authorities and may not be an individual or family owned organization or for-profit business. Summer practicums normally last between 8 and 12 weeks of full-time work (30-40 hr/week minimum), although highly structured 6 weeks programs may be acceptable. The work commitment can be intense, especially if the practicum involves a lot of travel to and from a remote field site. Students should be prepared to work independently with little supervision.
The purpose of the summer practicum is to:

- Gain first-hand experience with project management techniques including assessment and analysis, project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and report.

- Integrate development practice with knowledge of cross-cutting development issues including gender, education, environment, agriculture, health, infrastructure, water, livelihoods, and community development.

- Develop a capacity for fostering community participation in development projects.

- Identify effective strategies and policies to advance sustainable development at the local, national and global levels.

- Demonstrate critical self-reflection and analysis of preconceived attitudes, beliefs and biases and how they impact development practice on both an individual and organizational level.

- Strengthen inter-personal and cross-cultural communication and problem-solving skills.

- Communicate project achievements and challenges to multiple audiences using a variety of media, including project reports, policy briefs, web writing, presentations, videos, social media, etc.

For more information, students should consult the Practicum Handbook.

**Finding and Choosing and Practicum Partner**

Students should begin to think about possible directions for their practicum experience early on. While deciding on a seemingly endless array of possible organizations to work with may seem like a daunting task, this task can be managed by first defining one’s own professional goals and interests. For example, do you primarily want to work on hands-on development project implementation, or development research and policy making? Do you prefer to work more with local, grassroots community organizations, national agencies, or international non-governmental organizations? What themes are you most interested in or passionate about (e.g. education, gender empowerment, food security, health, etc.) What skills do you have or would you like to development (e.g., monitoring and evaluation, data management, program design, project management, communications, etc.). Do you see yourself based in the field or in an office headquarters? Finally, in what region do you want to work? Bear in mind, it is not uncommon for development professionals to start in one region and move to another, or to gain experience working in the field before moving to the office headquarters. What is most important for you at this stage is to start zeroing in on your topic and skill specializations (e.g. monitoring and evaluation of health projects.) Focus on skills that could be transferable to any location.

Once you are ready to start researching field internship opportunities, you can begin by pursuing online jobs sites like Idealist, Devex, and ReliefWeb. Organizations like Care International, Mercy Corps, or World Vision, as well as agencies like USAID and the World Bank, also list internships opportunities on the websites. Students should bear in mind that these larger organizations receive hundreds of
applications and are often take much longer to respond (if they respond at all.) This is another reason why you want to start applying as soon as possible. In addition, consider contacting local field or national offices of larger international organizations. Inquiring directly with a program manager will often get you a faster response than applying to a website. Finally, make use of personal networks and existing partnerships (below), as these are often the best ways to get your foot in the door. Please remember, though, when using the personal contacts and connections of your advisers you are putting their reputation and the reputation of the Arizona MDP program on the line. Try to avoid burning bridges both for yourself and for the students who will come after you.

**International Partners**
The Arizona MDP is proud to partner with Tango International, an internationally renowned, Tucson-based development practice firm; JustHope, a sustainable community development organization in Nicaragua; and World Fish, a CGIAR affiliated research institute working to reduce hunger and poverty through promoting fisheries and aquaculture. We have well-established working relationships with these organizations. Arizona students are encouraged to make use of these existing linkages in their search for a practicum partner. JustHope is a good option for students interested in community-based health and education projects in Latin America, whereas World Fish provides an excellent structured introduction to a wide range of issues including agriculture and aquaculture, rural development, livelihoods, nutrition, as well as cross-cutting issues like gender. Finally, Tango International offers technical assistance to food security, livelihood and resilience projects all over the world.

**Local Partners**
Although the Arizona MDP program does not currently have any formal memoranda of understanding with and local organization, students have undertaken their practicums locally before, and we are committed to supporting students who choose to undertake their field practicum experience here in Tucson or elsewhere in the Southwest border region. Development is not just something that happens “over there,” but here in our own communities as well. We have many contacts with local city and county government as well as local non-profit organizations working on a variety of issues related to sustainable development. Please let the MDP Director know if this is something that interests you.

**Expectations and Code of Conduct**
Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of professional and ethical practice while undertaking their summer field practicum, and to remember that they are representing the Arizona MDP program. This includes:

- Maintaining courteous and timely communication with the partner agency prior to departure and upon arrival.
- Complete all project assignments and duties in a timely and professional manner to the best of your ability.
- Respecting the guidelines of professional and culturally-appropriate dress and appearance as directed by the partner agency.
- Adhering to the partner agency’s policies regarding working hours and holidays.
- Maintain strict rules of confidentiality as set by the partner agency.
Summer Practicum Costs and Support
Although actual expenses will vary greatly, students should bear in mind the costs associated with their summer field practicum and budget accordingly. Students need to consider the cost of flights to and from the field site, housing in the field, per diem (food, transportation, etc.), health expenses/insurance, summer tuition, and the cost of rent or storage in Tucson while away. Again, these will vary considerably depending on how far the student is travelling for the field practicum as well as the cost of living in the field site. Often, practicum partners will cover all or part of the student’s expenses while in the field, including room and board and transportation. You will need to negotiate this up front with the organization and be clear about what they can provide. At the very least, you will likely need to cover your own airfare. Students should seek out external funding sources to cover travel costs such as the Graduate and Professional Student Council travel grant, travel or internship grants from various centers on campus (such as the Center for Middle Eastern Studies and the Institute of the Environment), or fellowships like the Pruitt Minority Fellowship, open to minority women in geography (which past students have received and used to help cover practicum expenses.)

Tuition and Fees
As with any investment, there are costs associated with graduate studies at the University of Arizona such as tuition, fees, books, and cost of living. Students should consult the Graduate College for the most accurate and up-to-date information regarding tuition, fees and expenses at the University of Arizona. The Graduate College has information on Costs and Fees, including Estimated Costs/Tuition Calculator. Be aware that late payment of tuition and fees may result in an added Bursar’s fee. Within the School of Geography and Development students also pay a program fee, and certain lab courses (including some GIS classes) may include a course fee.

Scholarships and Financial Aid
Although the MDP program cannot directly offer scholarships to students, MDP students can avail themselves of university resources that can help identify external funding opportunities. In particular, students should consult these two funding databases maintained by the university:

Pivot - Search Engine for funding for University of Arizona students

Scholarship Universe - Search Engine for funding for University of Arizona students

In addition, students should search other scholarship clearinghouse sites like the Mcnair Scholars Funding List, which lists a variety of funding options for different disciplines. A more comprehensive list of resources is provided in the “Advice on Searching for International Funding” provided to all incoming domestic and international students.

Graduate Assistantships
The School of Geography and Development is contractually obligated by the University of Arizona and the Graduate College to give priority for Teaching Assistantships and Research Assistantships to MA and PhD students as part of their professional development for academic careers. Nevertheless, students enrolled in professional Master’s courses (like the MDP and MS-GIST programs) may still apply and be
considered for these graduate assistantships. Prior to the start of each semester a call for Teaching Assistants is circulated amongst all graduate students in SGD. Students are asked to provide their top 3 teaching preferences and outline their teaching experience, including whether they have taken or taught those particular courses before. Taking into consideration scheduling and other personnel issues, the SGD Program Coordinator will allocate teaching assistantship assignments. There are always more applications for TA-ships than there are available positions, however MDP students have received them in the past.

Regarding Research Assistantships, these are allocated on an ad hoc basis depending on the availability of specific research funding and the needs of individual faculty for their funded research projects. Students should identify particular faculty with whom they are interested in working and inquire directly about the possibility of research assistantship opportunities. Students with a particular area focus or subject matter expertise should contact the appropriate departments to seek RA-ships outside of SGD.

**On Campus Job Opportunities**
There may be additional job opportunities on campus that carry benefits similar to those of TA/RA positions. On-campus jobs include student worker positions, Federal Work-Study (FWS) jobs, and hourly/part-time university employment. To be eligible for FWS, you must be eligible for financial aid and have completed the FAFSA (as with any scholarship opportunity.) Student worker positions can be found through the [Wildcat JobLink](#), the student employment fair held at the start of each Fall semester, departmental listservs, and direct inquiry to different departments on campus. Part-time and hourly employment can also be found on the [UA Careers](#) website. For more information, please consult career services.

**III. Professional Development**
As a professional Master’s program, preparation for the job market begins on day one. With each phase of your degree program you should ask yourself what knowledge, skill or experience can you gain that will translate into value for a future employer, and thus your own employability. This requires regular self-assessment. Don’t wait to the spring semester of your final year to prepare your professional résumé and start looking and searching for jobs. Start building your résumé now and start looking for what opportunities may be available to you when you finish and what skills or capacities are in highest demand. This kind of self-assessment and job market analysis will likely have an impact on your choice of courses, your areas of concentration and where you decide to do your practicum. Likewise, your coursework, graduate school performance, your practicum experience, and the professional networks you create and maintain over the course of your degree will all be important factors in securing a position the future.

Students should consult with the MDP Director early in the program for advice on how to structure their degree to maximum effect on the job market. The MDP Director and other faculty advisers and mentors will work with students to seek employment and to provide courses that focus on career development skills. The cross-cohort seminar is designed to facilitate mutual learning among students and faculty toward the aim of enhancing professional development and employability. This includes preparing CVs
and cover letters, interviewing, giving presentations, and making the most of your practicum experience. In addition, the MDP program seeks to provide students with a variety of professional development opportunities, including guest speakers, conferences, professional contacts, and mentoring to help students achieve their career goals. As part of this, all current students and recent alumni are given full access to the Arizona MDP professional Devex membership, including job boards and webinars. There are also career and professional development resources on campus that students can avail themselves of, and to which students will be guided towards where relevant. Ultimately, it is the student’s responsibility to take charge of their own job search and to seek out opportunities for professional networking and development.
IV. Appendices & Resources

1. The Academic Landscape
Nellis, D.M. and S.M. Roberts. 2009. Developing collegial relationships in a department and in a
discipline (Chapter 3). In: Aspiring Academics: A Resource Book for Graduate Students and Early Career

2. Geography resources
Organizations, URLs, and Links

3. "Soft" Skills

Teamwork
Bennet, L.M., H. Gadlin, and S. Levine-Finley. 2010. Collaboration and Team Science: A Field
Guide. National Institutes of Health, 79 pp. READ Chapters on: Starting to Think About Team Science
(pp 1-3) and Challenges (pp 57-63).

research and action. ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies, 2(1) 91-106. See
especially pp. 91 (abstract), 94-96, and 102-104.

Academics: A Resource Book for Graduate Students and Early Career Faculty. M. Solem, K. Foote, and J.
Monk, eds. Pearson, Prentice Hall, NJ. In particular, see pp. 190-195 and 199-200.

Communication
10 Tips for Handling Inquiries, Interviews (Excerpt from the August 2010 issue of Principal Investigator
Advisor)

Dabelko, G.D. 2005. Speaking their language: how to communicate better with policymakers and
opinion shapers – and why academics should bother in the first place. International Environmental
Agreements 5, 381-386.


Monk, J. Choreographing a different dance: placing research in the public arena. GeoJournal 65, 249–

Time Management
Other Reading and Resources


4. Preparing Proposals for Grant Funding
Helpful proposal writing overview (word doc)

Proposal writing tips


5. Publishing: Writing and Submission

Publishing Tips (from Ian Shaw)

Journals

ISI Web of Knowledge, Journal Citation Reports (Impact Factors and more)

Guides for Authors

Journals have guides for authors with information specific to that journal; for example, see AAG Publications

Elsevier : Publishing process, finding a journal, preparing and submitting your paper (some of this is specific to Elsevier, but some general guidelines also)

Responsibilities of Authors and Co-Authors


Peer Reviewing

A Publishing Guide for Geographers: Good Practice in Refereeing


7. Making Presentations

Mayden, S. Five Traits of Highly Effective Posters.

Reynolds, Garr. Presentation Zen: How to Design and Deliver Presentations Like a Pro

8. Attending Professional Conferences


9. Writing a CV and Developing a Web Site

CVs


Purdue Online Writing Lab: Writing the Curriculum Vitae

University of California, Berkeley Career Center: CV, Parts 1 and 2.


Sample CV for non-academic job

Web sites
Tutorial for setting up your academic web site
Instructions for uploading your web pages using a U-Systems Account

10. Careers and Securing a Job
The Chronicle of Higher Education web page, Manage Your Career has many useful articles.


Environmental Career Opportunities Job Search

International Development Jobs; Aidboard

Non profit organizations of interest to geographers

Application Process:
Tips for decoding job advertisements

Interviewing:

Interview Skills, UA Career Services

Also: Common Interview Questions and a Sample Interview Schedule

Notes on Telephone Interviews, Telephone Interview Questions 1 and 2

11. Ethics and Politics
AAG Statement on Professional Ethics


Montreal Statement on Research Integrity in Cross-Boundary Research Collaborations


Graduate Students and Early Career Faculty. M. Solem, K. Foote, and J. Monk, eds. Pearson, Prentice Hall, NJ. pp. 112-120.

12. Grad School Survival